



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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#### **Alabama laboratory meets current demand for novel H1N1 influenza testing.**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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While the Alabama Department of Public Health has improved its laboratory capacity to test for novel H1N1 influenza, the recent outbreak of H1N1 influenza indicates the need for further state laboratory expansion.

The Alabama Department of Public Health laboratory has received nearly 2,000 samples which have been tested for novel H1N1 influenza in recent weeks. More than 200 samples now can be processed daily because of the addition of new equipment. In Alabama approximately three fourths of all influenza viruses being detected through laboratory surveillance are novel H1N1 viruses, with the other one fourth being regular seasonal influenza viruses.

"We have a desperate need to expand the capacity of our 30-year-old laboratory," said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. "The facility stretches our ability to meet our demands despite the fact that laboratorians and other ADPH personnel have been working 16-hour days, 6 days a week, on novel H1N1 testing."

As of May 20, the total number of confirmed cases of novel H1N1 influenza in the state is 63. Counties and numbers of confirmed novel H1N1 cases which have been reported in residents are as follows: Madison, 35; Montgomery, 8; Jefferson, 5; Shelby, 4; Coffee, 2; Limestone, 2; Mobile, 2; Pike, 2; Blount, 1; Etowah, 1; and Lee, 1. The onset of the patients' symptoms occurred between April 20 and May 14.

The health department's response to novel H1N1 influenza drew on previous pandemic influenza planning and engaged staff from across the agency. After providing laboratory reports, providers and patients were contacted by telephone. In turn, surveillance staff determined whether the patients were students and their employment status. Surveillance staff also completed a case surveillance questionnaire. Other department staff collaborated to design and maintain web pages.

The symptoms of novel H1N1 influenza are similar to the symptoms of traditional influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with novel H1N1 influenza. Close associates are advised to limit their contact with others for a period of seven days from the time they were exposed.

The incubation period from the moment of exposure to novel H1N1 influenza until symptoms develop is two to seven days. Individuals are infectious to others one day before until seven days after symptoms develop. Persons who develop symptoms of respiratory illness should contact their medical provider.

The department Web site at [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org) provides regular updates of case counts of novel H1N1 influenza within the state.

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